BRIEFING NOTE ON ANGOLA
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AFRICA RECOVERY

UN battles to bring relief to war-torn Angola

By David Hecht

Angola has become one of the worst wars in the world, according to UN officials now trying to bring peace and increased relief to the country. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative Alioune Blondin Beye, returning from an early-October tour of areas until recently cut-off for up to 10 months by heavy fighting between government forces and those of opposition União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), said earlier figures of 1,000 deaths a day must "be considered conservative." Some estimates put the daily death toll during fighting in 1992-93 as high as 2,000, comparable to or even more than in Bosnia or Somalia.

AP/Wide World Photos

Refugees flee to the safety offered by a UN helicopter during fighting last April. UN-brokered talks are now bringing the prospect of renewed peace to Angola.

Fighting resumed in October 1992, following a cessation in the 16-year conflict between the government and the forces of UNITA leader Dr. Jonas Savimbi, in order for presidential and legislative elections to be held, the results of which were rejected by Dr. Savimbi. More people have died in the last 12 months than in all the previous 16 years of war, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in November.

The UN — first under Special Envoy Ms. Margaret Anstee, and since end-June 1993 under Mr. Beye — has been attempting to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table, following the rejection by UNITA of September 1992 UN-monitored elections. After nearly a year of fighting, UNITA announced a unilateral cease-fire immediately prior to the UN Security Council's 15 September 1993 threat of sanctions against it. Since then, UNITA has allowed humanitarian aid to be distributed in the territory it controls and, as of 15 November 1993, engaged in UN-brokered talks with the government in Lusaka. However, hostilities have not stopped completely.

Resumed fighting in 1992 had made distribution of humanitarian relief extremely difficult, if not impossible, in most parts of the country. Not only were relief personnel attacked, aircraft carrying food were also shot at and shot down. During this period, UN negotiators had persisted in seeking guarantees of safe passage for emergency relief from both sides, against the background of collapsed trade and production — the latter made worse by drought — widespread food shortages and large numbers of displaced people throughout the country.

Since end-August 1993, reduced levels of fighting between government and UNITA forces have enabled a clearer picture to be drawn of Angola's continuing tragedy. Out of a country of some 12 million people, up to 3 million require food or other emergency assistance, UN agencies and non-governmental orga-

nizations (NGOs) estimate, but they warn that an incalculable number of children and adults are sick and injured as a result of war and drought.

Since the beginning of September, UN agencies, working with NGOs, have tripled the amount of relief aid delivered. In November, the World Food Programme (WFP) delivered over 13,000 tonnes of aid, up from 2,000 tonnes in June (see graph, page 4). UNICEF is also stepping up relief activities, delivering vaccinations, essential drugs, water and sanitation equipment to 17 of the 18 provinces in the country. UNICEF estimates that some 2 million children have been affected by the war.

"Now that we have the opportunity to avert thousands of deaths, the greatest obstacle is a lack of resources."

UN Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson

More aid desperately needed

Relief needs continue to grow, but remain grossly underfunded. "Now that we have the opportunity to avert thousands of deaths, the greatest obstacle is a lack of resources," UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Eliasson said on 8 November in re-launching an urgent appeal for emergency relief.

Of the $226 mn for which the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) appealed in May, only $61 mn had been received (rising to $92.88 mn by 31 December). Since the May appeal, the "situation has seriously deteriorated," Mr. Eliasson said. "The outlook is grim for relief in emergency health, nutrition, water, sanitation, education and survival needs," he said.

In Benguela, Malanje, Luena, and Menongue, the influx from the surrounding rural areas has created havoc, with a lack of food and shelter. WFP Director of Operations in Angola Philippe Borel says "we have suddenly realized that people are even worse off when they amass in the big cities." The population of Luanda, Angola's already overcrowded capital, has mushroomed by an estimated 40 per cent since 1992 alone.

Mr. Eliasson said there is sufficient food to meet the short term needs of the estimated 2 million people in immediate danger of starving. However, in other areas the need for inputs is urgent. For example, $50.7 mn of DHA's $226 mn appeal is requested for UNICEF to reduce the growing number of children dying from malnutrition and curable diseases, but as of end-November only $2.3 mn of this had been pledged, the agency says. Of the $18 mn requested for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to supply seeds and tools to help Angolans become more rapidly self-sufficient in food production, no contributions had been made.

And Mr. Eliasson drew special attention to the lack of a modest $410,000 for starting the crucial task of removing an estimated 8 million land mines in Angola, which threaten the lives of the population and which will impede efforts at rehabilitation once peace is assured.

AP/Wide World Photos

Angolan government soldiers in a reserve position, northeast of Luanda, during fighting in February 1993 against UNITA forces around the city of Caxito.

Siege and suffering

In Kuito, capital of Bié province, land mines are one of many killers. After months of siege, starving civilians became so desperate that bands of them went out in luckless searches for food and were either cut down by gunfire or blown up in the booby-trapped fields where they were scavenging.

UNITA occupied Bié province at the start of the conflict, in October 1992, with the siege of Kuito beginning the following January. By June, the city's food reserves had been exhausted and inhabitants had to eat "leaves, grass, a paste made from banana leaves and roots, rats, mice, cats and brittle toasted maize," according to a WFP report.

READEX

Based on UN Map No. 3727, November 1993

Estimates of the total number of dead in Kuito in the last 10 months range from 18,000 to 35,000, or around 20 per cent of the population. Of survivors, many are injured, and there is the continuing threat of mass starvation. Angola's Foreign Minister Venancio de Moura says many people ate "human flesh to survive," and WFP's Robert Sanchez, who travelled with the first relief flight on 16 October, described an "apocalypse" with people having to drink from the river next to "dead bodies in the water."

The situation in Kuito has been repeated across much of Angola. Its resumed military activity in 1992/93 led to UNITA occupying up to 75 per cent of the country. UNITA has been laying siege to three of Angola's 18 provincial capitals, and is holding four others. This includes Huambo, Angola's second largest city, which was occupied by UNITA in March.

WFP reports that conditions in Huambo are almost as bad as Kuito. "Hospitals have no medicines...tuberculosis and malnutrition are on the rise," and the lack of clean water and sanitation are further aggravating health problems, the agency reports.

Of the 13 major conflict zones, two others where conditions are particularly bad are Malanje and Menongue, both under siege from UNITA forces. A UN team, led by Mr Beye, reported that as many as 125 children had been dying a day in Malanje. In early January, UNICEF appealed for $2 mn to provide urgent assistance to some 30,000 malnourished and abandoned children in Malanje.

In Menongue, early missions from WFP and UNICEF observed "shocking malnutrition" and a total absence of food stocks. Further pockets of vulnerable populations can be found throughout the country. Even where there is no conflict, levels of malnutrition and disease are rising.

UN and NGO relief operations are bringing help. UNICEF teams have been conducting vaccination campaigns in Huambo and Kuito. UNICEF and NGOs such as Caritas and World Vision are currently supporting some 100 community kitchens established in Malanje. But the arrival of the rainy season in October has brought the additional problem of a cholera epidemic that relief workers estimate is infecting some 1,000 people a week in Luanda alone. Also in Luanda, more than 2,000 children are known to have died from a measles epidemic in the first half of 1993 because of a lack of vaccine, coupled with their poor health due to hunger.

Dashed hopes

The grim catalogue of victims of Angola's renewed strife stands in tragic contrast to the hopes two years ago of a more peaceful future. On 31 May 1991, Angolans had been jubilant when Angola's President Jose Eduardo dos Santos and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, signed the "Acordos de Paz de

Bicesse," a formal, binding peace accord.

The end of the cold war seemed to have brought peace to Angola. With the end of strategic rivalry between East and West, Cuban troops finally departed from Angola, while thousands of refugees were beginning to return, many for the first time since rivalry between different independence movements — each backed by external supporters — turned into serious fighting in 1975. External backers of the conflict pledged to end their support.

UN/Y. Nagata

Mali's Alioune Blondin Beye. As the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to Angola since June 1993, he has succeeded in re-opening peace talks.

The United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I) —first established in 1988 to verify the withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola — was modified by a Security Council resolution to also verify the implementation of the Peace Accords. UNAVEM II — as it was known from June 1991 — was given a limited mandate to verify the assembly and partial demobilization of Angola's two opposing armies and unification of the remainder into a single Angolan Armed Force (FAA). However, UNAVEM had no operational authority to organize the assembly and disarming of forces. Similarly, the Security Council mandate authorized UNAVEM to monitor presidential and legislative elections, but gave the UN no role in organizing and conducting the electoral process, which was considered to be a national affair.

The elections themselves passed off peacefully, and were subsequently declared by the UN to have been generally free and fair. In the legislative elections, the governing Movimento Popular para a Libertaçao de Angola (MPLA) won a majority of votes over other parties. In the presidential elections, while President dos Santos received more votes than Dr. Savimbi, he fell just short of the 50 per cent required to be declared the outright winner. This meant that a run-off between President dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi had to be organized.

Dr. Savimbi, however, claimed the elections had not been free and fair and rejected the results. Following a period of great uncertainty, UNITA's generals withdrew from the new military alliance. Later, the group quickly launched a nationwide offensive, during which it overran much of the country, occupied many local municipalities and replaced their administrations.

At the same time, there were reports in the first months after the election, particularly in Luanda, as well as in some other cities, that thousands of people suspected of supporting UNITA had been massacred.

UNAVEM II lacked the mandate or the military resources to intervene in this situation. Ms. Anstee and UNAVEM officials were repeatedly attacked and threatened on UNITA's Vorgan radio. In November 1992, the UN succeeded in getting provisional agreement on the resumption of the peace process. But despite the 5 November visit of then Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Marrack

Chronology

31 May 1991 – Acordos de Paz de Bicesse—formal cease-fire signed in Portugal. Agreement includes: timetable for the laying down of arms, the unifying of the two armies into one Angola Armed Force (FAA), and the holding of national elections, to be monitored by the UN.

UNAVEM I, which had a mandate to verify the withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola, is now revised to verify the implementation of the Peace Accords, and becomes known as UNAVEM II. UNAVEM forces deployed to some 46 assembly areas to verify cease-fire demobilization.

29-30 September 1992 – National elections are held. 400 UNAVEM II observers monitor some 4,000 of the 6,000 polling stations.

3 October 1992 – UNITA claims widespread and systematic voter irregularities. National electoral commission and UNAVEM investigate and find no conclusive evidence.

7 October – UNITA generals withdraw from the FAA in protest over the elections.

11-14 October – Security Council sends ad hoc commission of representatives from Cape Verde, Morocco, the Russian Federation, and the United States. Military situation continues to deteriorate.

17 October – Election results are announced. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos secures 49.57% of the vote against Dr. Jonas Savimbi's 40.07%. According to Angolan electoral law, a second round of presidential elections are called as neither candidate achieved 50% of the vote. In the legislature, MPLA wins 53.74% of the vote against 34.1% for UNITA. UNAVEM II deems elections to have been free and fair.

UNITA launches military operation to occupy municipalities by force and remove local administrations.

31 October – Fighting erupts in several major cities. Several of UNITA's leadership are among those killed in Luanda.

2 November – Official cease-fire achieved with the efforts of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and his Special Representative Margaret Anstee, and the diplomats of various member states.

5 November – Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Marrack Goulding arrives in Angola to assist UN Special Representative in meeting with both sides to put peace process back on track.

26 November – In Namibe, UN Special Representative convenes meeting with senior delegations of both sides and agreement is reached for cease-fire.

29 November – UNITA forces take the northern cities of Uige and Negage. UN Secretary-General makes personal effort to hold meeting with the two leaders, but fails.

8 January 1993 – Outbreak of heavy fighting in 10 provincial capitals, as well as several other population centres.

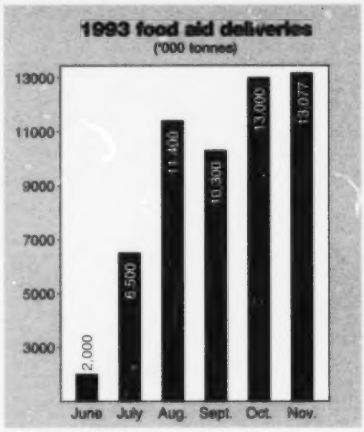
Goulding to Luanda and continuous diplomatic efforts, the fighting escalated. In an increasingly dangerous situation, the UN had no option but to withdraw early in 1993 its monitors and reduce its presence in Angola to 50 military, 18 police and 11 paramedics.

Despite UNITA losing much of its external financial and military support (principally that from the United States and South Africa) it was still able to mount a widespread military campaign. UNITA's occupation of some of the rich diamond area of the north-east reportedly gave it access to new sources of revenue, and it was able to take over the oil region around Soyo.

Despite some interruptions, the country's oil production was maintained. The government in turn was able to remobilize and resume its military operations, which had been run down in the more peaceful period of 1991. In the second half of 1993 government forces began to advance in several areas, re-occupying most of Benguela province and destroying several of UNITA's communication hubs in Huambo and Bié provinces.

UNITA may have been further weakened by the UN Security Council's embargo on fuel and military supplies, which came into effect on 25 September 1993. According to reported estimates, however, UNITA's current arms stockpiles could suffice for at least two more years.

After years of civil war, Angola again faced the prospect of a protracted battle in which neither side could marshall sufficient resources to secure victory. Economic reforms attempted by the government lay in tatters, with hyper-inflation crippling whatever economic activity could take place outside the oil sector.



Source: World Food Programme

UN options

UN efforts to achieve renewed peace have mirrored the shifting fortunes in this protracted struggle in which there are few clear battlelines. In February 1993, when UNITA appeared to be gaining an upper hand, their negotiators did not even show up at one of the UN-sponsored meetings scheduled in Addis Ababa. In May, talks held in Abidjan had to be suspended, despite achievingconsiderable progress during several weeks of negotiations.

Recent months have seen a new willingness for peace despite continued outbreaks of fighting.

However, in recent months, Mr Beye says he has detected a "new willingness" for peace. In September, three days before members of the Security Council were to vote on the resolution to implement an arms and fuel embargo, UNITA submitted a proposal for a "unilateral declaration of a cease-fire." The Council, however, reiterated its demand for the immediate

21 January – Secretary-General states in report that "Angola has returned to civil war." UNAVEM II mission greatly reduced.

27-30 January – In Addis Ababa,UN Special Representative chairs talks with delegations from the two sides. Parties disagree on terms of cease-fire but agree to meet again in February.

26 February – Second round of talks in Addis Ababa is cancelled when UNITA fails to send its delegation.

7 March – Huambo, Angola's second largest city, falls to UNITA forces.

12 April – In Abidjan, UN-sponsored talks begin. Meeting last six weeks.

19 May – United States officially recognizes the Angola government for the first time since its inception in 1975.

21 May – Agreement is about to be reached in Abidjan after six weeks, but talks are suspended at the last moment.

24 May – Soyo, in Angola's oil region, is captured by UNITA after a four-day battle.

28 June – Secretary-General appoints Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye of Mali as the new Special Representative to Angola.

15 July – In M'banza Congo, UNITA fires on UN World Food Programme relief flight despite guaranteeing safe passage.

12 September – UNITA declares a unilateral cease-fire but the proposal does not abide by the legal framework established by the Security Council.

15 September – Security Council adopts resolution 864 prohibiting all sale and supply of military and petroleum products to UNITA.

25 September – UN Sanctions take effect. In São Tome, UN Special Representative and foreign diplomats hold talks with UNITA which are boycotted by the Angolan Government.

25 October – In Lusaka, Zambia, UN Special Representative chairs closed-door exploratory talks between delegations of both parties.

1 November – UN Security Council postpones further trade sanctions against UNITA until 1 December.

15 November – Lusaka, Zambia. Closed doors talks between government and UNITA begin under UN auspices.

15 December – Security Council extends UNAVEM II mandate until 15 March 1994, and further postpones additional sanctions against UNITA pending results of peace negotiations.

23 December – Talks in Lusaka suspended until 5 January 1994 with agreement on a number of points, including principles of a cease-fire.

withdrawal of UNITA troops "from the locations which it has occupied since the resumption of hostilities," acceptance of the Bicesse Accords as the "legal framework for the peace process," and acceptance of "the results of the elections of September 1992."

The UN resolution went into effect on 25 September and additional sanctions freezing international assets and further isolating UNITA by restricting trade and the foreign travel of its politicians are pending, their implementation to be determined by the fate of the peace talks under way since last November between the Government of Angola and UNITA in Lusaka.

In mid-November both sides gathered in Lusaka under UN auspices to renew efforts to find a peaceful solution to the present conflict. By late-December, when talks were suspended until January, both sides had agreed on the general and specific principles, as well as the timetable for implementation of a cease-fire, for the withdrawal of UNITA forces from areas they had taken since the resumption of hostilities and on the demobilization and storage of weapons and the creation of a unified Angolan Armed Force. UNITA had also accepted "in writing" the validity of the Bicesse Peace Accords and had taken note of the resolutions of the Security Council.

Several other provisions in the peace accords remain to be resolved, including the creation of a unified neutral police force and of a new UN mandate for Angola. Most important of all, of course, remains the question of national reconciliation.

While UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the present atmosphere as one of "cautious optimism and hope," he called for "much more effort" to achieve a final settlement. In the present situation the Secretary-General has made clear that the UN must be prepared to do all it can to respond rapidly to any developments. Once an effective cease-fire is in place, the Secretary-General recommends, as a first step, to immediately deploy an additional military contingent and police observers. Moreover a substantial presence of UN "Blue Helmets," may be required.

In the meantime, the UN is acting with great urgency to alleviate the suffering of Angola's people, despite the difficulties created by continued outbreaks of fighting and the havoc war has brought to the country's transport and other infrastructure. The teams from WFP, from UNICEF, FAO and other agencies now distributing aid and other assistance through Angola are the most concrete example of this commitment.

WFP/Mercedes Sayagues

With fighting less intense the UN and NGOs have been able to increase delivery of much needed food and other essentials.

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